

## A RARE EARLY MANUSCRIPT OF THE MULIAN STORY IN THE BAOJUAN (PRECIOUS SCROLL) GENRE PRESERVED IN RUSSIA, AND ITS PLACE IN THE HISTORY OF THE GENRE

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The main purpose of this article is to introduce a rare early manuscript of a *baojuan* (precious scroll; a genre of Chinese popular religious storytelling) text preserved in Russia and to demonstrate its importance in the history of this genre. The text in question is an incomplete (three of four volumes have survived) illustrated manuscript entitled *Baojuan of Reverend Maudgalyāyana Rescuing His Mother [so that she] Escapes Hell and Is Reborn in Heaven* (*Mujianlian zunzhe jiu mu chuli diyu sheng tian baojuan* 目犍連尊者救母出離地獄生天寶卷; hereafter *Baojuan of Maudgalyāyana*).<sup>2</sup> The manuscript is dated to 1440.

*Baojuan* are prosimetric texts that were recited to a lay audience mainly for the purpose of religious instruction. At the earliest period of the history of this genre (ca. 13th–15th centuries), *baojuan* were intended to propagate Buddhist doctrine, but as time passed various folk sects composed their own scriptures in *baojuan* form.

*Baojuan of Maudgalyāyana* was originally kept in a private Russian collection, so it remained practically unknown to the Chinese and Japanese scholars doing research on *baojuan*. Although there are several studies published in China and Japan that pay considerable attention to early *baojuan* dealing with the Mulian story,<sup>3</sup> their authors

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<sup>2</sup> In the version of the title given at the end of the manuscript, the first five characters are replaced by “Mulian” 目連.

<sup>3</sup> Most important are Zheng Zhenduo 鄭振鐸, *Zhongguo su wenxue shi* 中國俗文學史 (History of Chinese popular literature; Beijing: Dongfang chubanshe, 1996 reprint; 1st published, Changsha: Commercial Press, 1938), pp. 486–95; Liu Zhen 劉禎, “Mulian jiu mu yu baojuan xingcheng” 目連救母與寶卷形成 ([The story] of Mulian rescuing his mother and the formation of *baojuan*), *Zhongguo minjian Mulian wenhua* 中國民間目連文化 (Chinese Mulian folk culture; Chengdu: Ba Shu shushe, 1997), pp. 241–57; Che Xilun 車錫倫, *Zhongguo baojuan yanjiu* 中國寶卷研究 (Research on Chinese *Baojuan*; Guilin: Guangxi shifan daxue, 2009), pp. 72–76 and 491–96; Yoshikawa Yoshikazu 吉川良和, “Kyū bo kyō” to “Kyū bo hōkan” no Mokuren mono ni kansuru setsuchō geinō teki shiron 救母經と救母寶卷の目連物に関する説唱藝能的試論 (Preliminary discussion of the storytelling art characteristics concerning the story of Mulian in *Sutra of Rescuing Mother* and *Baojuan of Rescuing Mother*), *Shakaigaku kenkyū* 社會學研究 (Studies in Social Sciences; annual bulletin of Hitotsubashi University) 41 (2003.2): 61–135, and “Kyū bo kyō” to “Sei ten hōkan” no seisho nendai shōken 救母經と生天寶卷の成書年代商榷 (Discussion of the time of composition of the *Sutra of Rescuing Mother* and the *Baojuan of Rebirth in Heaven*), *Jinbun kenkyū* 人文研究 (Studies in the Humanities [Kanagawa University]) 155 (2005.3): 9–43; Beata Grant and Wilt L. Idema, trs., *Escape from Blood Pond Hell: The Tales of Mulian and Woman Huang* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2011), “Introduction,” p. 9.

did not have information about *Baojuan of Maudgalyāyana* and to date it has only been briefly mentioned in studies of *baojuan* in Russian and English.<sup>4</sup> Now, as the manuscript has become available (see below), it is time to discuss the special features of its form and contents.

This article will focus on explaining the place of this text in the long tradition of prosimetric narratives dealing with the Mulian story in China, and *baojuan* dealing with this subject in particular.<sup>5</sup> At the same time, I also correct several inaccuracies about this manuscript that can be found in Russian publications. For example, Kira F. Samosyuk considers the manuscript of *Baojuan of Maudgalyāyana* to be unique,<sup>6</sup> but a close analogue to it does exist. This is the illustrated manuscript with the very similar title of *Baojuan of Mulian Rescuing His Mother [and Helping Her] to Escape from Hell and Be Born in Heaven* (*Mulian jiu mu chuli diyu sheng tian baojuan* 目連救母出離地獄生天寶卷; henceforth *Baojuan of Mulian*; Che no. 691).<sup>7</sup> It originally belonged to Zheng Zhenduo 鄭振鐸 (1898–1958) but is now held by the National Library of China.<sup>8</sup> I will first carry out a detailed comparison between the two manuscripts and demonstrate how *Baojuan of Maudgalyāyana* can both improve our understanding of *Baojuan of Mulian* and the early period of development of the genre. Then I discuss the place of these two manuscripts among other pieces dealing with the Mulian story in Chinese popular literature: such a systematic comparison has not been done before, as scholars have compared *Baojuan of Mulian* only with the texts earlier than it (Liu Zhen and Yoshikawa Yoshikazu) or later than it (Che Xilun). The article closes with the discussion of the special features of *Baojuan of Maudgalyāyana* as an early specimen of the *baojuan* genre. I will deal mainly with the text of the manuscripts, but I cannot exclude their illustrations from my

<sup>4</sup> See Rostislav Berezkin, “The Development of the Mulian Story in *Baojuan* Texts (14th–19th centuries) in Connection with the Evolution of the Genre,” doctoral diss., University of Pennsylvania, 2010, pp. 104–105, and *Dragocennnye svitki (Baotsiuan’) v duhovnoi kul’ture Kitaia: Na primere Baotsiuan’ o Treh Voplosheniyah Muliania* (Precious scrolls [*Baojuan*] functioning in the culture of China, with *Baojuan about Three Rebirths of Mulian* as an example; Saint-Petersburg: Saint-Petersburg Center for Oriental Studies, 2012), pp. 69–71. For a short description of this manuscript, see Kira F. Samosyuk, “Kitaiskaia illiustrirovannaia rukopis’ o hozhdenii Muliania v preispodniuiu,” *Soobscheniia Gosudarstvennogo Ermitazha* LXIX, Saint-Petersburg, 2011, pp. 175–82; English translation: “Chinese Illustrated Manuscript about the Descent of Mulian into Hell,” *Reports of the State Hermitage Museum* 64 (2011): 175–82. Dr. Samosyuk focuses mainly on the illustrations and does not compare the text with other storytelling pieces dealing with the Mulian story.

<sup>5</sup> For the convenience of the reader, a chronological list of the major pieces on Mulian discussed in this article appears in Appendix One.

<sup>6</sup> Samosyuk, “Chinese Illustrated Manuscript,” p. 179.

<sup>7</sup> This number directs the reader to the listing of the *baojuan* in Che Xilun 車錫倫, *Zhongguo baojuan zongmu* 中國寶卷總目 (Comprehensive catalogue of Chinese *baojuan*; Beijing: Yanshan shuju, 2000).

<sup>8</sup> Zheng reproduced in modern typeset form part of the text in his *Zhongguo su wenxue shi* (pp. 486–95) but mis-transcribed part of the title as *sheng tian* 升天 instead of *shengtian* 生天. Yoshikawa Yoshikazu reproduced the entire text (again, in modern typeset form) in his “Kyū bo kyō” to “Kyū bo hōkan,” pp. 123–34. I rely below mainly on his version but with a few corrections made after comparison with the original.

discussion completely, as they have a narratorial function and are closely connected with the text.

## BAOJUAN OF MAUDGALYĀYANA AND BAOJUAN OF MULIAN: A COMPARISON

### BAOJUAN OF MAUDGALYĀYANA

*Baojuan of Maudgalyāyana* retells the story how the Buddha's disciple Mulian rescued the soul of his sinful mother from the sufferings of hell and saw to her rebirth in heaven. This story originated in the Buddhist scripture *Sūtra of Ullambana Expounded by the Buddha* (*Fo shuo Yulanpen jing* 佛說盂蘭盆經; hereafter *Sūtra of Ullambana*), whose Chinese version dates to the beginning of the 4th century.<sup>9</sup> The story was elaborated in texts of popular literature at least as far back as *bianwen* 變文 (transformation texts) dating to the eighth through tenth centuries that were discovered in Dunhuang in 1900,<sup>10</sup> and was a favorite topic for both storytellers and dramatists.<sup>11</sup> One could say that the story is particularly prominent in the genre of *baojuan*,<sup>12</sup> but later versions in this genre differ significantly from *Baojuan of Maudgalyāyana*.

*Baojuan of Maudgalyāyana* originally belonged to Vladimir A. Desnitskiy (1878–1958), a famous literary critic and scholar of Russian literature. It was recently purchased by the State Hermitage Museum in St. Petersburg (Inv. No. LT–8702). When and where Desnitskiy purchased the manuscript is unknown.

A line of text written with gold ink on the dedicatory placard at the end of the manuscript records that the work “was respectfully donated by Imperial Consort Jiang in the 5th year of the Zhengtong reign period of the Great Ming [1440]” 大

<sup>9</sup> The non-Chinese original, if indeed there was one, has not survived.

<sup>10</sup> On the development of the story in general, see Chen Fangying 陳芳英, *Mulian jiu mu gushi zhi yanjin ji qi youguan wenxue zhi yanjiu* 目連救母故事之演進及其有關文學之研究 (Study of the development of the story of Mulian rescuing his mother and related literature; Taipei: Guoli Taiwan daxue wenxueyuan, 1983); Stephen F. Teiser, *The Ghost Festival in Medieval China* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988); Victor H. Mair, *T'ang Transformation Texts: A Study of the Buddhist Contribution to the Rise of Vernacular Fiction and Drama in China* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1989), pp. 17–18; and Liu Zhen, *Zhongguo minjian Mulian wenhua*, pp. 1–31.

<sup>11</sup> See for example, David Johnson, ed., *Ritual Opera, Operatic Ritual: “Mu-lien Rescues His Mother” in Chinese Popular Culture; Papers from the International Workshop on the Mu-lien Operas* (Berkeley: University of California, 1989); Zhu Hengfu 朱恆夫, *Mulian xi yanjiu* 目連戲研究 (Study of Mulian drama; Nanjing: Nanjing daxue chubanshe, 1993); Liu Zhen, *Zhongguo minjian Mulian wenhua*, pp. 32–343; Qitao Guo, *Ritual Opera and Mercantile Lineage: The Confucian Transformation of Popular Culture in Late Imperial Huizhou* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2005); and Wang Kui 王馮, *Guijie chao du yu quan shan Mulian* 鬼節超度與勸善目連 (Salvation, the Ghost Festival, and propagation of morality through Mulian; Taipei: Guojia chubanshe, 2010).

<sup>12</sup> See David Johnson, “Mu-lien in *Pao-chüan*: The Performative Context and Religious Meaning of the *Yu-ming pao-ch'uan*,” in *idem.*, ed., *Ritual and Scripture in Chinese Popular Religion: Five Studies* (Berkeley: University of California, 1995), pp. 55–103; and Berezkin, “The Development of the Mulian Story in *Baojuan* Texts” and *Dragocennye svitki (Baotsiuan') v dubovnoi kul'ture Kitaia*.



FIG. 1. Image of Skanda (right) and placard with text (left) at the end of the fourth volume of *Baojuan of Maudgalyāyana* (manuscript Inv. No. LT 8702). Photograph © The State Hermitage Museum, St. Petersburg. Photo by Natalia Antonova, Inna Regentova.

明正統五年皇妃姜氏敬獻 (fig. 1). This dedicatory placard has the form of a “dragon placard”—a rectangular stele with wings and a top element covered with a pattern featuring dragons—that is quite common for the *baojuan* manuscripts and editions dating back to the fourteenth through sixteenth centuries (see below). I have not been able to find any information on Consort Jiang.<sup>13</sup> She presumably donated the text to a Buddhist institution. We know nothing of the calligrapher or painter, nor do we have evidence that the manuscript was produced by court artisans.

<sup>13</sup> The fact that the manuscript was commissioned by a female member of the imperial court is quite in accord with the information that we have about later manuscripts and editions of *baojuan*. For instance, the woodblock edition of *Baojuan of the Original Vows and Merit of the Master of Medicine* [Bhaiṣajya] (*Yaoshi benyuan gongde baojuan* 藥師本願功德寶卷; 1544) is said to be sponsored by the imperial consort Zhang (Zhang Defei 張德妃) and five princesses. See Zhang Xishun 張希舜 et al., eds., *Baojuan chuji* 寶卷初集 (The first collection of *baojuan*), 40 vols. (Taiyuan: Shanxi renmin, 1994), 14: 385.

The three surviving volumes of this manuscript are made up of pages that have been pasted together to make one long sheet, written on one side only, and folded “accordion-style” (*jingzhe* 經折), a format typical of the Chinese manuscripts and editions of the Buddhist scriptures and *baojuan* of the sixteenth through seventeenth centuries. This contrasts with the later widespread practice of folding printed sheets and stitching them together on the side away from the fold. The text is inscribed with black ink on thick paper, and the illustrations are executed with water-based pigments. All volumes have binding, apparently of later origin, that consists of a blue fabric glued on cardboard. The four characters of the first phrase of the *Book of Changes* (*Yijing* 易經), *yuan* 元, *heng* 亨, *li* 利, and *zhen* 貞, are used to number the volumes (it is the second volume that is missing).

It seems that the manuscript was restored twice in the past. The first time, the original pages were padded with new paper, and damaged portions of the text and illustrations were repainted. The second time, the manuscript was remounted on paper of roughly the same length but different height, producing wide margins at the top and bottom of the pages. The size of the covers (and the later mounting of the manuscript) is 40 × 18.5 cm; the size of the original pages containing illustrations and text is around 30 × 16.3 cm. On average, there are six lines of characters on each page, with 16 characters in each line. The top and bottom margins of the original pages are bordered by a red line. There is also a floral pattern at the end of each large section of the text (each of which is composed of several scenes, see below) that serves as a border.<sup>14</sup>

The page numbers are inscribed consecutively on the reverse sides of every other page.<sup>15</sup> There are 57 such numbers (numbers 1–57) in the first volume,<sup>16</sup> 41 (numbers 110–58) in the third volume and 51 (numbers 160–207) in the fourth volume. Because the numbers are sequential, we can tell how large the missing second volume was.

The text of *Baojuan of Maudgalyāyana* is divided into multiple sections with a set structure. There are 52 such sections in the extant three volumes of the manuscript. They correspond to the division into sections called *pin* 品 or *fen* 分 in *baojuan* of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. In *Baojuan of Maudgalyāyana*, however, unlike later *baojuan*, these sections are not titled. Every section in *Baojuan of Maudgalyāyana* consists of a prose part followed by a seven-character antithetical couplet (*duilian* 對聯), eight lines of seven-character verse, verse with an irregular number of characters per line of a special form often appearing in early *baojuan* that has been called “hymn” (*gezan* 歌贊) by scholars,<sup>17</sup> and four lines of five-character meter verse.<sup>18</sup> Eight arias (*qu* 曲) are also inserted in the sections. Two different tune patterns (*qupai* 曲牌) are used:

<sup>14</sup> Fig. 2, right side, has an example of this.

<sup>15</sup> Since these numbers refer to sets of two pages, in my citations to the manuscript I use an additional “a” or “b” to indicate whether the first or second page of each set of double pages is meant.

<sup>16</sup> The first set of double pages is unnumbered.

<sup>17</sup> On the possible origins of this type of verse, see Che Xilun, *Zhongguo baojuan yanjiu*, pp. 83–84.

<sup>18</sup> The original Chinese and translations of the prose parts of the first two sections is provided below in the main text, while the original text and a translation of the non-prose part of the first section appears in Appendix Two.





FIG. 2. First page (left) of illustration of Mulian's mother being reborn as a dog, fourth volume of *Baojuan of Maudgalyāyana*. Photograph © The State Hermitage Museum, St. Petersburg. Photo by Natalia Antonova, Inna Regentova.

“Gua jinsuo” 掛金鎖 (Wearing the golden lock) four times and “Jinzi jing” 金字經 (Sūtra in golden characters) four times (once in the conclusion). The poetic parts of the sections usually reiterate the content of the opening prose passages; sometimes they also mention events that will be described in detail in the following prose passage. This repetition of content between the prose and verse sections is very characteristic of *baojuan* literature and is related to the function of *baojuan* as scripts for oral performance. The hymns and the songs in *Baojuan of Maudgalyāyana* usually contain moral injunctions.

We can call each section a scene, as the details of the narrative they tell are depicted in the illustrations placed at the beginning of a text section. Most (33) of the sections begin with illustrations, which are pretty evenly distributed throughout the whole of the manuscript. The illustrations tend to spread over multiple pages, in most cases occupying three pages, but some only occupy double pages.<sup>19</sup>

<sup>19</sup> While in the first volume all illustrations appear in three-page clusters (excluding the illustrations on the first six pages), in the third volume, four of the fourteen clusters of illustrations are on double pages, and in the fourth volume, ten of the twelve clusters of illustrations are on double pages.



FIG. 3. Second and third pages of illustration of Mulian's mother being reborn as a dog, fourth volume of *Baojuan of Maudgalyāyana*. Photograph © The State Hermitage Museum, St. Petersburg. Photo by Natalia Antonova, Inna Regentova.

#### BAOJUAN OF MULIAN

*Baojuan of Mulian* and *Baojuan of Maudgalyāyana* have almost identical text and illustrations, but the latter is more complete. Comparison of the two demonstrates that less than a half of *Baojuan of Mulian* has survived, as the manuscript part opens with a section that appears in the middle of the third volume of *Baojuan of Maudgalyāyana*. From that point on the text and illustrations of the two manuscripts coincide (for example, compare the illustration of how Mulian's mother obtained rebirth as a dog after Mulian carried out a ritual for her salvation in *Baojuan of Maudgalyāyana* [figs. 2–3] and in *Baojuan of Mulian* [fig. 4]).

*Baojuan of Mulian* was rebound as an album. The size of its pages is 31 × 30 cm. There are mostly six lines of characters on each page, with 16 characters in each line, same as *Baojuan of Maudgalyāyana*. It also ends with a dragon placard inscription, but the characters have faded and are very unclear. Zheng Zhenduo did not try to guess what the text said. Zhu Hengfu 朱恆夫 examined the manuscript in 1984 and explained his ability to read the inscription as due to the availability of better lighting. According to Zhu, it read: “Made on imperial order on the auspicious day in the third year of the Xuanguang reign period [1372], donated by the disciple Tuotuo [Toghtō]” 勅旨宣光三年谷旦造. 弟子脱脱氏施



FIG. 4. First page of illustration of Mulian's mother being reborn as a dog, from the last of the three volumes of *Baojuan of Mulian*. Image courtesy of Che Xilun.

捨.<sup>20</sup> Xuanguang was a reign period of the Northern Yuan dynasty (1369–1404), which was established after Ming troops captured the main Yuan capital. Yoshikawa Yoshikazu argues that the two characters in the inscription are not Xuanguang but Zhiyuan 至元, the name of a different reign period (1335–1340),<sup>21</sup> the third year of which would be 1337. Yoshikawa furthermore connects the name of the donor, Tuotuo, with the famous statesman of the Zhiyuan reign period who lived 1314–1355 and also served as the main editor of *The History of the Song Dynasty* (*Songshi* 宋史).<sup>22</sup> But based on my inspection of the original, I agree with Zhu Hengfu that the reign period is Xuanguang and not Zhiyuan.

At any rate, *Baojuan of Mulian* most probably dates to the last period of the Yuan dynasty (1260–1368). There are several features that tie it to items dating back to that time: (1) the contents of the text, (2) the tune patterns used in the text, and (3) the style of the illustrations. I will discuss the first of these below, in a special section. As concerns the second, Che Xilun asserts that they are close to other specimens surviving from the Yuan dynasty, and actually argues that they allow us to claim that the text really dates from around the year 1234 (the time of the Jin-Yuan transition).<sup>23</sup> However, his evidence is not strong, since similar song

<sup>20</sup> Zhu Hengfu, *Mulian xi yanjiu*, p. 94.

<sup>21</sup> Yoshikawa Yoshikazu, “Kyū bo kyō’ to ‘Sei ten hōkan,’” p. 27.

<sup>22</sup> Yoshikawa Yoshikazu, “Kyū bo kyō’ to ‘Sei ten hōkan,’” pp. 31–33.

<sup>23</sup> Che Xilun, *Zhongguo baojuan yanjiu*, 73.



patterns were also used later than the thirteenth century.<sup>24</sup> As for the third item, the style of the illustrations, it is quite close to the style of Yuan dynasty paintings.<sup>25</sup> Zheng Zhenduo also argued for a Yuan-dynasty date, arguing that the blue and gold color scheme of the illustrations in the manuscript was common in Yuan dynasty books but rarely appears after the middle of the Ming dynasty.<sup>26</sup> We can conclude that the manuscript of *Baojuan of Mulian* pre-dates that of *Baojuan of Maudgalyāyana*, and although the latter is dated to 1440, its text was composed much earlier (probably the last century of the Yuan dynasty).

## THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE DISCOVERY OF *BAOJUAN OF MAUDGALYĀYANA*

Because of the early date of *Baojuan of Maudgalyāyana* and the fact that it is a more complete version of *Baojuan of Mulian*, it provides important information about the early period of development of the *baojuan* genre. In this section I show how this is the case.

The first example of something missing from *Baojuan of Mulian* that is preserved in *Baojuan of Maudgalyāyana* concerns the opening illustrations in the first volume. That volume opens with a five-page illustration that shows the assembly of monks and celestial beings presided over by the Buddha, who is seated on a lotus throne (figs. 5–6). The sixth page depicts a “dragon placard” with the text wishing the emperor long life (*Huangdi wansui, wansui, wanwan sui* 皇帝萬歲萬歲萬萬歲) (fig. 7, left side). Such images of assemblies of deities and dragon placards are typical of editions of Buddhist and Daoist scriptures that date back to the Ming dynasty (1368–1644), and one can find similar images in *baojuan* produced by the sects in the sixteenth century.<sup>27</sup> An example of this is the woodblock edition of *Baojuan of Tathāgata Puming Who Understood the Meaning of Non-Interference* (*Puming rulai wuwei liaoyi baojuan* 普明如來無為了意寶卷; 1599 reprint; henceforth *Baojuan of Puming*; Che no. 794) in the collection of the Saint Petersburg Institute of Oriental Studies.<sup>28</sup> The opening illustration in that *baojuan* also shows a large assembly of deities and believers and includes three dragon placards with auspicious inscriptions. However, as a syncretic text, *Baojuan of Puming* includes the images of the seated founders of all three teachings, not only the Buddha. Such images are typical of editions of sectarian *baojuan* of the sixteenth century.

<sup>24</sup> Yoshikawa Yoshikazu, “‘Kyū bo kyō’ to ‘Kyū bo hōkan’ no Mokuren mono,” pp. 90–91, already demonstrated that similar song patterns appear in the late 16th century novel *Jin Ping Mei cibua* 金瓶梅詞話 (Plum in the golden vase). This novel describes the performance of *baojuan* and related tunes.

<sup>25</sup> Professor Nancy S. Steinhardt, a specialist in Yuan dynasty art, noted the similarity of the style of several illustrations of this manuscript to the style of the Yongle gong 永樂宮 (Palace of eternal joy) murals, a masterpiece of Yuan dynasty religious art of the 14th century (personal communication, January 2010).

<sup>26</sup> Zheng Zhenduo, *Zhongguo su wenxue shi*, 479.

<sup>27</sup> It is well known that *baojuan* imitated aspects of the format of Buddhist and Daoist scriptures.

<sup>28</sup> See El’vira S. Stulova, ed. and tr., *Baotsziuan’ o Pu-mine* (Moscow: Nauka, 1979); this *baojuan* is also reproduced in *Baojuan chujī*, 4: 377–525, and Pu Wenqi 濮文起, ed., *Minjian baojuan* 民間寶卷 (Folk *baojuan*) 20 vols., 2: 334–450, in *Zhongguo zongjiao lishi wenxian jicheng* 中國宗教歷史文獻集成 (Collection of scriptures of Chinese religions) 120 vols. (Hefei: Huangshan shushe, 2005).



FIG. 5. First two pages of illustration of the Buddha's Assembly, first set of illustrations in *Baojuan of Maudgalyāyana*. Photograph © The State Hermitage Museum, St. Petersburg. Photo by Natalia Antonova, Inna Regentova.



FIG. 6. Next two pages of illustration of the Buddha's Assembly, first set of illustrations in *Baojuan of Maudgalyāyana*. Photograph © The State Hermitage Museum, St. Petersburg. Photo by Natalia Antonova, Inna Regentova.



FIG. 7. Final page of illustration of the Buddha's Assembly (right) and "dragon placard" (left), first set of illustrations in *Baojuan of Maudgalyāyana*. Photograph © The State Hermitage Museum, St. Petersburg. Photo by Natalia Antonova, Inna Regentova.

The opening illustrations also have counterparts in the concluding images. At the end of the fourth volume of the manuscript, right before the text that mentions Consort Jiang, there is the image of Skanda (Ch. Weituo 韋陀/馱), guardian of Buddhist teaching (fig. 1). Ending a work with an image of him is also typical of editions of Buddhist sūtras and *baojuan* dating back to the fourteenth through sixteenth centuries. For example, a similar image of Skanda and a text in the form of a placard appear at the end of *Baojuan of the Original Vows and Merit of the Master of Medicine* [Bhaiṣajya] (*Yaoshi benyuan gongde baojuan* 藥師本願功德寶卷), made in 1544.

The number and kinds of illustrations in *Baojuan of Mulian* and *Baojuan of Maudgalyāyana* are quite rare for *baojuan* manuscripts and editions. Illustrations of the "narrative" type in each section also appear in the editions of *baojuan* of the Vast Yang Teaching such as [Bao]juan of *Studying the Way through Bitter Toil of the Vast Yang* (*Hongyang ku gong wu dao juan* 弘陽苦功悟道卷), however, they are not in color.<sup>29</sup> Usually, *baojuan* editions have illustrations only at the beginning and at the end.

<sup>29</sup> See, for instance, an edition probably dating from the end of the sixteenth or beginning of the seventeenth century reprinted in *Minjian baojuan*, 5. 225–302.

The second important element preserved in *Baojuan of Maudgalyāyana* is its elaborate introductory section. It contains instructions for the performer and the audience:

The believers at the ritual area should put their palms together in prayer in front of their chests, sit upright according to the rules and recite the Heart Sūtra at the end of this scroll in the spoken language. The participants of the assembly should reverently chant the Buddha's name in response, and this will create merit.

道場眾等合掌當胸，端坐如法，舉念心經以畢白文卷。大眾虔誠齊聲和佛。所有功德。(p. 3a)

This explains the performance mode of *baojuan* (for details see below). After that there follows a sacred formula in Sanskrit letters and two sacred formulas in Chinese characters: the first of these concerns paying obeisance to the three treasures of Buddhism—the Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha—in all ten directions (*guiming shifang yiqie Fo, fa, seng* 歸命十方一切佛、法、僧) while the second reads: “the Wheel of the Law constantly turns and saves all living beings” (*Falun chang zhuan du zhongsheng* 法輪常轉度眾生). Then there is a prose passage that briefly summarizes the contents of the text. It opens with the words:

The Scroll of Mulian [tells] how the Lady Qingti performed all kinds of bad deeds, and how because of her knowledge of this, with her thoughts she created much harm [for the living beings]. . . .

夫目連卷者乃青提夫人作諸惡業，因所知也，以此心多殺害。 . . . (p. 3b)

This passage can be classified as “a text of conditioned origin” (*yuanqi* 緣起), which is a standard element in Buddhist popular literature, including early *baojuan*. Then there is a verse passage in 22 lines with seven characters per line, starting with the words “*Baojuan* of Mulian has been transmitted since antiquity till now” (*Mulian baojuan gujin chuan* 目連寶卷古今傳; pp. 4a–5a). It is followed by the prose passage starting with the words “thus have I heard” (*rushi wo wen* 如是我聞), a formula used to introduce Buddhist scripture (pp. 5a–b). Then there is a verse passage in 20 lines with seven characters per line, starting with the words “The *baojuan* of Mulian is no sooner opened. . . .” (*Mulian baojuan cai zhankai*. . . 目連寶卷纔展開. . . ; pp. 5b–6a), which we can label as “the *gāthā* on opening the sutra” (*kai jing ji* 開經偈), an element standard in early *baojuan* texts.

This introductory section has its counterpart in the concluding part of the text that also includes several special verse forms. After the last regular section, the “text of taking vows” (*fayuan wen* 發願文) follows (pp. 205a–206a). This is the expression of the wishes of the performer (and audience) that all living beings would escape disasters and suffering. Then the “Hymn of Old Man Chuan” (*Chuan lao song* 川老頌) appears (pp. 206a–206b). It is followed by the “text of transfer of merit” (*huixiang [wen]* 回向[文]; Skt. *Parīṇāma*; p. 206b). These texts also express wishes for the salvation of all living beings. The text of transfer of merit claims that all sentient beings will realize their true nature (*zhenru* 真如; Skt. *Tathatā*, one of the key concepts of Mahāyāna Buddhist philosophy), and all living creatures will mount the opposite shore [of salvation]. The text of *Baojuan of*



*Maudgalyāyana* ends, as noted above, with a song to the tune pattern of “Jinzi jing” (p. 207a).

Several elements of both the introductory and concluding parts of *Baojuan of Maudgalyāyana* have close parallels in other *baojuan* and related works dating back to the thirteenth through sixteenth centuries that represent popularizations of Buddhist literature. Most of these works also open with sacred formulas, invocations, a “text of conditioned origin,” and a *gāthā* on opening the *sūtra*. For example, these features appear in *Liturgy Based on the Diamond Sūtra with Full Explication* (*Xiaoshi Jingang jing keyi* 銷釋金剛科儀; henceforth *Liturgy Based on the Diamond Sūtra*; Che no. 1346), written around 1242 by a monk named Zongjing 宗鏡. This text of the popular Buddhist tradition was an important antecedent of *baojuan* texts and is often called a *baojuan* in later works of Chinese popular literature.<sup>30</sup> Many *baojuan* of the sixteenth century imitate the style of its introduction and conclusion.<sup>31</sup> However, while the content of the introduction of *Baojuan of Maudgalyāyana* is typical of this type of literature even though it is shorter and simpler and has conspicuously individualistic features, its concluding part contains nothing but stock elements that can be found in almost identical form in other texts.<sup>32</sup>

*Baojuan of Maudgalyāyana* gives us a fuller idea of what the complete earlier manuscript of *Baojuan of Mulian* would have been like, but since both lack the material covered in volume two of *Baojuan of Maudgalyāyana*, we remain in the dark about that part of the manuscript. The manuscript of *Baojuan of Maudgalyāyana* is obviously outstanding in terms of its early date and peculiarities of form and content. It appears to be the second earliest solidly dated *baojuan* text after *Baojuan of Mulian*. The content, musical forms, and style of illustration in these two manuscripts are unique in the history of *baojuan* literature. However, an examination of *Baojuan of Maudgalyāyana* also demonstrates that it shares many features with other *baojuan* texts and related prosimetric literature, which proves that this text can also be thought of as a quite typical example of the *baojuan* genre.

## THE PLACE OF *BAOJUAN OF MAUDGALYĀYANA* IN RELIGIOUS STORYTELLING DEALING WITH MULIAN

As was already noted, quite a number of examples of religious storytelling texts dealing with the Mulian story have survived. The earliest extant complete example is *Bianwen of Mahāmaudgalyāyana Rescuing His Mother from the Underworld*

<sup>30</sup> Significantly, *Liturgy Based on the Diamond Sūtra* also has the same structure of prosaic and poetic parts of the text as in *Baojuan of Mulian* and *Baojuan of Maudgalyāyana*, except that the first does not use arias.

<sup>31</sup> Che Xilun, *Zhongguo baojuan yanjiu*, pp. 69–70.

<sup>32</sup> On the existence of these in *Liturgy Based on the Diamond Sūtra* and *baojuan* of the sixteenth century, see Che Xilun, *Zhongguo baojuan yanjiu*, pp. 71–72 and 518–28. On the authorship of “Hymn of Old Man Chuan” and its circulation in Buddhist texts, see *ibid.*, pp. 512–23 and 526–27.

(*Da Muqianlian mingjian jiu mu bianwen* 大目乾連冥間救母變文; henceforth *Bianwen of Mahāmaudgalyāyana*), copied in 921, and discovered at Dunhuang.<sup>33</sup> This version represents a major development of the story, compared to the original *Sūtra of Ullambana*.<sup>34</sup> The new details of the *bianwen*'s contents include: (1) the punishment of Mulian's mother in Avīci (Chin. Abi 阿鼻) Hell, the deepest realm of underworld; (2) the journey of Mulian through all the divisions of hell before he finds his mother's soul; (3) the rebirth of Mulian's mother as a dog after she is released from hell and is saved from the realm of hungry ghosts; and (4) at the end, Mulian's mother is reborn in the Heaven of the Thirty-Three Celestials (Skt. *devās trayas-triṃśāḥ*, Ch. *Daoli tian* 忉利天). All these details also appear in *Baojuan of Maudgalyāyana*.

However, closest among the earliest of the Mulian stories to *Baojuan of Maudgalyāyana* in terms of contents and form is the indigenous Chinese Buddhist scripture *Sūtra of Mulian Rescuing His Mother Expounded by the Buddha* (*Fo shuo Mulian jiu mu jing* 佛說目連救母經; henceforth *Sūtra of Mulian*) that dates back to the thirteenth century. This text was lost in China but copies of it were discovered in the twentieth century in Japan and Korea. A Japanese illustrated edition was printed in 1346 and survived in a unique copy in the Kinkōji 金光寺 monastery in Kyoto.<sup>35</sup> The colophon says that the original was printed in Yin County 鄞縣 of Zhedong 浙東 (in the modern city of Ningbo in Zhejiang Province) in a *xinhai* 辛亥 year and purchased by a Japanese (?) person in Guangzhou in 1304. The question of what year the cyclical date corresponds to has engendered much discussion. Yoshikawa Yoshikazu quite persuasively argues that the date of the publication of the original is 1251.<sup>36</sup>

The Korean versions are entitled *Sūtra of Great Mulian as Expounded by the Buddha* (*Fo shuo da Mulian jing* 佛說大目連經; henceforth *Sūtra of Great Mulian*). *Sūtra of Great Mulian* is almost identical to *Sūtra of Mulian*. The oldest among the Korean versions is held in Yonngisa 煙起寺 (Yonngisa monastery) and is dated 1537; this and several other editions of the sixteenth century are illustrated.<sup>37</sup>

<sup>33</sup> The manuscript was catalogued as S (Stein) 2614 and is translated and annotated in Victor H. Mair, *Tun-huang Popular Narratives* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), pp. 123–66 (notes, pp. 223–62). The next most complete version is P (Pelliot) 2319, which is available in a translation by Eugene Eoyang as “The Great Maudgalyayana Rescues his Mother from Hell,” in Y. W. Ma and Joseph S. M. Lau, eds., *Traditional Chinese Stories: Themes and Variations* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1978), pp. 443–55. The copyist of P2319 elided portions of the verse passages but left traces when he did so (see Mair, *T'ang Transformation Texts*, pp. 124–25).

<sup>34</sup> For an important intermediary apocryphal piece, see Teiser, *The Ghost Festival*, pp. 58–62.

<sup>35</sup> For a photoreprint of the Japanese edition, see Miya Tsugio 宮次男, “Mokuren kyū bo setsuwa to sono kaiga—Mokuren kyū bo kyō e no shutsugen ni tsunde” 目連救母說話とその繪畫—目連救母經繪の出現に因って (The story of Mulian and its illustration—On *The Illustrated Scripture on the Story of Mokuren Rescuing his Mother*), *Bijutsu kenkyū* 美術研究 (Journal of art studies) 255 (January 1968): 155–78. For a critical edition (collated with the Korean edition of 1537), see Yoshikawa Yoshikazu, “Kyū bo kyō' to 'Kyū bo hōkan' no Mokuren mono,” pp. 116–22.

<sup>36</sup> Yoshikawa Yoshikazu, “Kyū bo kyō' to 'Sei ten hōkan' no seisho nendai shōken,” pp. 18–19.

<sup>37</sup> For a reproduction of its text, see Minn Yonggyu 閔泳珪, “Wōrin Sōkpo che isip-sam chan'gwon” 月印釋譜第二十三殘卷 (On the 23rd volume of *Wōrin Sōkpo*), *Tongbang hakchi* 東方學志 (Journal of Far Eastern studies) 6 (June 1963): 5–9. See also Sa Jae-dong 史在東, “Zhong-Han Mulian gushi zhi liubian guanxi” 中韓目連故事之流變關係 (Circulation of the Mulian story in China and Korea), *Hanxue yanjiu* 漢學研究 (Chinese Studies) 6.1 (1988): 224–25.

Korean woodblock editions name the monk Dharmadeva 法天 (fl. 973–1001?) as the translator of *Sūtra of Great Mulian* but such a connection between him and this text is not substantiated by other sources.<sup>38</sup>

Although the title of *Sūtra of Mulian* labels it as a canonical work, it does not deserve that status and was certainly formed under the influence of popular prosimetric literature such as *Bianwen of Mahāmaudgalyāyana*, with which it shares common elements. But there are also several important points of difference between *Sūtra of Mulian* and *Bianwen of Mahāmaudgalyāyana*: firstly, there is a certain discrepancy with regard to details of the story in that *Sūtra of Mulian* obviously represents a later amplification of the story of Mulian.<sup>39</sup> Secondly, unlike *bianwen*, which are almost always written in prosimetric form, *Sūtra of Mulian* is written completely in prose. Nevertheless, Liu Zhen has argued that *Sūtra of Mulian*, although not a record of an oral storytelling version, is closely related to such traditions.<sup>40</sup>

*Baojuan of Maudgalyāyana* in its turn almost literally follows *Sūtra of Mulian*. Here I present a translation of the opening prose passage of *Sūtra of Mulian*. Text that is also found in *Baojuan of Maudgalyāyana* (pp. 8a–12a) is underlined and differences are explained in footnotes. For the poetic passage that separates the two sections in *Baojuan of Maudgalyāyana*, see Appendix 2:

In the city of the King's seat [Rājagṛha] there was an elder called Fu Xiang. His family was very wealthy: his camels, mules, elephants, and horses filled<sup>41</sup> the mountains and covered the plain; brocade, damask, gauze, fine silks, and rare pearls filled his treasury.<sup>42</sup> He lent money to various officials, nobody knows how many. When the elder spoke he often smiled, and never went against people's feelings. In the "six perfections" he often realized [the principles] of the six pāramitās.<sup>43</sup> The elder suddenly became sick and consequently died very quickly.<sup>44</sup> Husband and wife had only one son,<sup>45</sup> whose name was Luobu. When Luobu saw that his father had died,<sup>46</sup> he buried him in a mountainous place belonging to his father.<sup>47</sup>

<sup>38</sup> See Minn Yonggyu, "Wōrin Sōkpo che isip-sam chan'gwon," p. 4.

<sup>39</sup> For a comparison of details, see Miya Tsugio, "Mokuren kyū bo setsuwa," pp. 166–67.

<sup>40</sup> Liu Zhen, *Zhongguo minjian Mulian wenhua*, pp. 247–48.

<sup>41</sup> *Baojuan of Maudgalyāyana* has a variant form for one character (徧 for 遍).

<sup>42</sup> For the rest of this sentence after the semicolon, *Baojuan of Maudgalyāyana* has "True pearls filled the storehouses, with heaps of jade and piles of gold" 珍珠滿庫, 積玉堆金.

<sup>43</sup> Skt. *sat-pāramitās*; the six practices of a bodhisattva that ferry one beyond the sea of mortality to nirvāṇa: charity, morality, forbearance, effort, meditation, and wisdom. Instead of these three sentences, *Baojuan of Maudgalyāyana* has "The elder was fond of doing charity and fasting, and constantly practiced the pāramitās" 長者好善持齋, 常行波羅蜜.

<sup>44</sup> This sentence in *Baojuan of Maudgalyāyana* is worded differently (忽然長者得患重病. 不過數日而亡) but the meaning is basically the same.

<sup>45</sup> The wording in *Baojuan of Maudgalyāyana* for the last four characters (止有一子) is slightly different, but the meaning is basically the same.

<sup>46</sup> *Baojuan of Maudgalyāyana* has *wanghua* 亡化 instead of *wangmo* 亡歿, and adds that Luobu "organized a vegetarian feast and a ritual assembly" 修齋設會.

<sup>47</sup> *Baojuan of Maudgalyāyana* has "buried [his father] in a mountainous place" 埋殯山中 and adds "maintained mourning for three years" 守孝三年. In *Sūtra of Mulian*, "father" and "mother" from Luobu's point of view are written as *Aye* 阿爺 and *Aniang* 阿娘, respectively, while in *Baojuan of Maudgalyāyana* these terms are *fu* 父 for him and *muqin* 母親 or just *mu* 母 for her.

After mourning for his father for three years,<sup>48</sup> he came forward and addressed his mother<sup>49</sup>: “When my father was alive, his money and valuables<sup>50</sup> were without count. However, today<sup>51</sup> the storehouses and treasuries<sup>52</sup> are going to be empty. I, your son, want to take some money and go abroad to engage in commerce.”<sup>53</sup> He sent the servant Yili to take out the money.<sup>54</sup> There were three thousand strings of cash<sup>55</sup> divided into three parts: one part was left for his mother to supply the household, another part was left to his mother with the purpose of making offerings to the three treasures [of Buddhism] and for a vegetarian feast for five hundred monks in commemoration of his father’s [death] day, while the son took the third part and left for the state of Quan,<sup>56</sup> where he engaged in commerce on a big scale.<sup>57</sup>

昔王舍城中，有一長者，名曰傅相。其家大富；駝驢象馬，遍山蓋野。錦綺羅納，真珠滿藏。諸頭放債，莫知其數。長者語常含笑，不逆人情，六度之中，常行六波羅蜜。長者忽然染患，遂即身亡。夫婦二人，唯養一子，名曰羅卜。見父亡歿，葬於阿爺山所。三年服滿，來啓阿娘：“阿爺在日，錢財無數，即今庫藏，并欲空虛，兒欲將錢出往外國經紀。”遣奴益利運將錢本出，有三千貫文，分作三分：一分留與阿娘，供給門戶，一分留給阿娘，供養三寶，為爺日設五百僧齋；兒將一分往全地國，興生經紀。<sup>58</sup>

This close relationship between the two texts is maintained throughout. It seems like the author(s) of the *baojuan* elaborated on the text of the apocryphal *sutra* by slightly expanding the prose and repeating the content in verse form. The format of the illustrations of the Japanese and Korean versions of the apocryphal *sūtra* is also quite close to that of the *baojuan*, although the former are not in color.

If we compare these two opening prose passages with the corresponding text of another version of the Mulian story, *Mulian Repays the Source and Does Penitence at the Site of Enlightenment and Compassion* (Cibei daochang Mulian

<sup>48</sup> This phrase in *Baojuan of Maudgalyāyana* is worded differently (羅卜守父服滿), but the meaning is basically the same.

<sup>49</sup> *Baojuan of Maudgalyāyana* just has him address his mother (啟告), but adds her name/title, Lady Qingti 青提夫人, after “mother.”

<sup>50</sup> *Baojuan of Maudgalyāyana* has *qianliang* 錢糧 instead of *qiancai* 錢財.

<sup>51</sup> *Baojuan of Maudgalyāyana* has *rujin* 如今 instead of *jijin* 即今.

<sup>52</sup> The order of these two nouns is reversed in *Baojuan of Maudgalyāyana*.

<sup>53</sup> *Baojuan of Maudgalyāyana* has *maimai* 買賣 instead of *jingji* 經紀. It also adds “I wonder what Mother thinks of that?” 未知母意如何, and “When the lady heard him say this she then . . .” 夫人聽說便. . .

<sup>54</sup> *Baojuan of Maudgalyāyana* has *ling* 令 instead of *qian* 遣, *jiaren* 家人 instead of *nu Yili* 奴益利, and *panyun* 盤運 instead of *yun* 運, and *kunei qianwu* 庫內錢物 instead of *qianben chu* 錢本出.

<sup>55</sup> *Baojuan of Maudgalyāyana* specifies that Luobu evenly divided the money.

<sup>56</sup> *Quan* 全 (complete) may be a mistake for *jin* 金 (gold). The Korean edition of 1536 has *jin* instead of *quan* (see Yoshikawa Yoshikazu, “Kyū bo kyō” to “Kyū bo hōkan,” p. 117), as does *Baojuan of Maudgalyāyana*, which also adds *nei* 內 after the name of the country.

<sup>57</sup> *Baojuan of Maudgalyāyana* has *jingying shengli* 經營生理 (engage in business) instead of *xingsheng jingji* 興生經紀.

<sup>58</sup> The punctuation of the Chinese texts was added by me.



*baoben chanfa* 慈悲道場目連報本懺法),<sup>59</sup> we find an even closer relationship between the latter, which seems to also date from the fourteenth century, and the *Sūtra of Mulian*. It is written in a slightly more elegant style that favors breaking up the narrative into four character phrases.

While *Baojuan of Maudgalyāyana* thus has close ties to early versions of the Mulian story, it differs considerably from sixteenth- through seventeenth-century literary pieces that deal with the same story. There is another manuscript with the same title as *Baojuan of Maudgalyāyana* (henceforth *Baojuan of Maudgalyāyana* no. 2; Che no. 693) that originally belonged to Zheng Qian 鄭騫 (1906–1991).<sup>60</sup> It is also incomplete, but unlike *Baojuan of Maudgalyāyana* and *Baojuan of Mulian*, it is not illustrated.<sup>61</sup> It probably dates from the sixteenth or seventeenth century. First of all, the sections in the text of this *baojuan* (called *fen* 分) are named and numbered (sections 31–86 are extant). The poetic halves of the sections differ from those of *Baojuan of Maudgalyāyana* in that they include ten-character-per-line verse and regularly end with an aria (*qupai*). All of these features are typical of *baojuan* of the sixteenth through seventeenth centuries but do not appear in earlier *baojuan*.<sup>62</sup>

Che Xilun has shown that the main development of the story line in *Baojuan of Maudgalyāyana* no. 2 resembles that of *Baojuan of Mulian*, with some episodes in both texts coinciding almost exactly.<sup>63</sup> However, there are also new elements such as the inclusion of Liu Jia 劉價, a maternal uncle of Mulian who persuades his mother to break her commitment to fast and do works of charity after the departure of Mulian on his business trip. This and other details are shared between this *baojuan* and the earliest extant theatrical treatment of the Mulian story, Zheng Zhizhen's 鄭之珍 (1518–1595) *Newly Compiled Drama Exhorting Goodness of Mulian Rescuing His Mother* (*Xinbian Mulian jiumu quanshan xiwen* 新編目連救母勸善戲文; henceforth *Drama Exhorting Goodness*),<sup>64</sup> but it is not clear which of these pieces appeared first.

<sup>59</sup> This text was first described by Qian Nanyang 錢南揚 (1899–1987), “Mulian xi kao” 目連戲考 (Study of Mulian drama), *Beida guoxue yuekan* 北大國學月刊 (Peking University national studies monthly), ser. 1, 6 (1927): 109–113. It is also described in Liu Zhen, *Zhongguo minjian Mulian wenhua*, pp. 248–55. Examples of a Ming and a Qing woodblock edition of a similar text with a slightly different title with pretty much the same meaning, *Cibei lanpen Mulian dao chang chanfa* 慈悲蘭盆目連道場懺法, are preserved in the National Library of China; both have a postface that is dated to 1351.

<sup>60</sup> It was also once owned by Fu Xihua 傅惜華 (1907–1966), who recorded the *sheng tian* 生天 of the title as *sheng tian* 升天 in his 1951 *Baojuan zonglu* 寶卷總錄 (Catalogue of *baojuan*), but is now kept in the Library of the Research Institute of Drama (Xiqu yanjiu suo 戲曲研究所) in the Chinese Academy of Arts.

<sup>61</sup> Only the last two volumes out of three survive and a part of the conclusion is missing. On this text, see Dai Yun 戴雲, “*Mujianlian zunzhe jiu mu chuli diyu sheng tian baojuan manlu*” 目鍵連尊者救母出離地獄升天寶卷漫錄 (Leisurely notes on *Baojuan of Reverend Maudgalyāyana Rescuing His Mother [so that she] Escapes Hell and Is Reborn in Heaven*), *Gansu yiyuan* 甘肅藝苑 (Arts of Gansu) 2004. 2: 11–13 and Che Xilun, *Zhongguo baojuan yanjiu*, pp. 491–96.

<sup>62</sup> See Che Xilun, *Zhongguo baojuan yanjiu*, pp. 151–61.

<sup>63</sup> Che Xilun, *Zhongguo baojuan yanjiu*, pp. 493–94.

<sup>64</sup> See, for instance, Dai Yun 戴雲, “*Mujianlian zunzhe jiu mu chuli diyu sheng tian baojuan manlu*,” p. 13.

Another special feature of *Baojuan of Maudgalyāyana* no. 2 that differs from the Russian manuscript and which points toward the future is its sectarian affiliation. *Baojuan of Maudgalyāyana* no. 2 is dedicated to propagating the Teaching of Non-Interference (Wuwei jiao 無爲教, also known as the Luo jiao 羅教 [Luo teaching]).<sup>65</sup> The Teaching of Non-Interference produced quite a few *baojuan* and this particular *baojuan* represents a trend that became very prominent—the use of popular religious tales to promulgate the teaching of sects instead of Buddhism in general.

Thus, *Baojuan of Maudgalyāyana* is very similar to versions of the famous Mulian story that developed around the thirteenth century; it both carried forward the long tradition of storytelling and apocryphal Buddhist literature on this subject and formed a foundation for the further development of this story in the storytelling and dramatic pieces of the sixteenth century.

### SPECIAL FEATURES OF THE CONTENTS AND FORM OF *BAOJUAN OF MAUDGALYĀYANA*

As was already noted, *Baojuan of Maudgalyāyana* contains a lot of rare evidence on the contemporary role and use of *baojuan* literature, which was in a formative stage at that time. Here I wish to particularly look at the specific topics of the religious system, sinicization, moralistic message, and the peculiar form of the illustrations in this manuscript.

Che Xilun has already pointed out the quite orthodox nature of the religious ideas in *Baojuan of Mulian*, which is, of course, also to be found in *Baojuan of Maudgalyāyana*.<sup>66</sup> Both contain a combination of popular conceptions of Pure Land Buddhism (which offered the hope of rebirth in the western Pure Land through invocation of the name of Amitābha Buddha) and Chan Buddhism (which emphasized meditation). *Baojuan of Maudgalyāyana* consistently encourages the audience to recite the name of Amitābha in order to be born in “The Lotus Pond of the Ninth Level” (*jiupin liantai* 九品蓮台) while Mulian practices Chan meditation and gives the idea that both practices are equally effective.

*Baojuan of Maudgalyāyana* also cleaves closely to mainstream Buddhist literature as it imitates features of the format of the Buddhist sūtra. This format is imitated, for instance, in the opening prose segment of *Baojuan of Maudgalyāyana*:

That is what I heard: Once the Buddha was in the Gr̥dhra-kūṭa Mountains<sup>67</sup> in the state of Śrāvastī. Many great monks [bhikṣu] assembled there: twelve thousand persons altogether. Besides, there was a multitude of Bodhisattvas: thirty-eight thousands of them, eight groups of spiritual beings,<sup>68</sup> arhats, enlightened monks, and deities of the three realms. All of them put their palms together in prayer and listened to the Buddha, who narrated the karmic causation of the past. All of them rejoiced, accepted the Buddha's instructions for right behavior, paid reverence to the Buddha, and departed.

<sup>65</sup> This religious tradition has been quite well studied. See, for example, Daniel L. Overmyer, *Precious Volumes: An Introduction to Chinese Sectarian Scriptures from the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries* (Cambridge: Harvard University Asia Center, 1999), pp. 38–46.

<sup>66</sup> Che Xilun, *Zhongguo baojuan yanjiu*, p. 77, n.1.

<sup>67</sup> This refers to Vulture Peak (Lingjiu 靈鷲), a mountain located near Rājagṛha where the Buddha was supposed to have preached many Mahāyāna sermons such as the famous *Lotus Sūtra*.

<sup>68</sup> Deva, nāga, yakṣa, gandharva, asura, garuḍa, kimnara and mahoraga.

如是我聞。一時佛在舍衛國耆闍崛山中。聚集大眾比丘：萬二千人俱。復有諸菩薩：三萬八千，天龍八部，羅漢聖僧，三界神祇；並皆合掌聽佛說往昔過去因緣之事。皆大歡喜，信受奉行，作禮而去。(pp. 5a–b)

The first phrase of this passage, “thus have I heard” (Skt. *evam mayā śrutam*), is the usual way for sūtras to begin.<sup>69</sup> The last part of the passage—“all of them rejoiced, accepted the Buddha’s instructions for right behavior, paid reverence to the Buddha, and departed” —also frequently appears in sūtras. As already mentioned, this assembly of believers and deities is depicted in the opening illustrations of *Baojuan of Maudgalyāyana*. Besides showing the Buddha, bodhisattvas, and various deities (including the fierce guardians of faith and flying heavenly maidens, so typical of Chinese Buddhist art), they also show persons dressed in Chinese-style clothes of the time. These figures certainly represent Chinese believers, deified Confucians, and deities of Chinese national origin. The illustrations of the assembly thus represent a combination of foreign Buddhist iconography with native Chinese religious images and is consistent with the way the text combines Buddhist (some still unmistakably Indian) and Chinese elements.

Although this opening passage extensively uses Buddhist terminology, the author (or editor) of this text also demonstrates a rather poor understanding of the texts of the Buddhist canon and the world they represent. The text says that the Gr̥dhra-kūṭa Mountains (in reality, just one peak) were located in the state of Śrāvastī, while it is well-known that this mountain was situated near Rājagṛha in the state of Magadha 摩揭陀國, the native place of Maudgalyāyana according to canonical literature. This would have bothered any person well-versed in canonical Buddhist literature but it is unlikely that it would have been noticed by the lay audience that it seems the text was produced for.

Though *Baojuan of Maudgalyāyana* imitates the format of the Buddhist scripture and contains a lot of Buddhist content, it also refers to indigenous Chinese cultural values. For example, the first verse in its introduction stresses filial piety. After an opening quatrain we get this quatrain:

This *baojuan* about Mulian has been transmitted since antiquity till now,  
It admonishes people to perform filial piety and forge benign karmic links.  
The multitude of Buddhas and bodhisattvas took a profound vow:  
Of all the things that people do filial piety comes first.  
目連寶卷古今傳，勸人行孝結良。諸佛菩薩弘誓願，人生百行孝為先。  
(p. 4a)

The passage goes on to devote four lines each to three (Wang Xiang 王祥, Guo Ju 郭巨, and Meng Zong 孟宗) of the famous “Twenty-Four Filial Sons” (*Ershi si xiaozi* 二十四孝子)<sup>70</sup> and ends this way:

With these fine words we widely exhort the people of this world  
To broadly practice the way of filial piety and to serve one’s parents.

<sup>69</sup> In the sūtras the pretense is that Buddha’s disciple Ānanda, who had attended all of the Śākyamuni Buddha’s lectures and memorized them, was later asked to recite the sermons so that they could be recorded.

<sup>70</sup> On these paragons of filial piety, see Keith Knapp, *Selfless Offspring: Filial Children and Social Order in Early Medieval China* (Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 2005).

To respect one's parents is as good as respecting the Lord [A]mitabha,  
 "Celestial dragons" favor people with filial thoughts.

We reverently exhort the masses to practice piety to the fullest,  
 And by no means let thoughts of unfiliality arise.

Filiality moves both Heaven and Earth,

For a thousand myriad years you will be seen as a wise man!

良言普勸世間人，廣行孝道奉雙親。敬親好似彌陀主，龍天偏向孝心。奉勸眾  
 人行大孝，切莫生起忤逆心。孝順感動天和地，千年萬載作賢人。 (pp. 4b–5a)

Of course, the idea of uniting filial piety and Buddhism as a way to overcome native Chinese resistance to some of the foreign elements of the latter appears already in the *Bianwen of Mahāmaudgalyāyana*, hundreds of years before.<sup>71</sup> *Baojuan of Maudgalyāyana* develops the religious syncretism and moralistic message of the earlier works of popular Buddhism, as it contains this very explicit praise of filial piety and its equation with the highest values and powers of Buddhism.

While the second introductory verse in *Baojuan of Maudgalyāyana* thrice mentions calling the Buddha's name and once mentions fasting, and stresses the benefits of such practices, only once is there any intimation that Buddhist liberation and house-holding might be at odds ("If you only covet what binds you to your family there will be no end to it" 貪戀家緣無盡休). Buddhist monks and nuns are in the background and only "wise men" (*shengxian* 聖賢) are put forward as models.

This second introductory verse is typical of the introductory verses in the *baojuan* genre. Phrasing from it appears in almost exactly the same form in later specimens of the genre dating from the sixteenth–seventeenth centuries to texts still in use.<sup>72</sup> This verse also refers to the common practice in *baojuan* performances called "chiming in with the Buddha's name" (*he fo* 和佛): at the moment the performer finishes each even line of verse, the audience sings the last syllable/character in the line together with the performer and chants the Buddha's name. This practice is documented in the novel *Jin Ping Mei* 金瓶梅 (Plum in the Golden Vase) and continues in modern performances of *baojuan* in China.<sup>73</sup>

Speaking of traces of performance in the text of *Baojuan of Maudgalyāyana* leads us to the question of the role of its copious illustrations. They naturally make us think of storytelling genres around the world that made use of visual aids,<sup>74</sup> and of the importance of visual aids (either in the form of cave murals or illustrations

<sup>71</sup> For the Buddhist appropriation of filial piety as a core Buddhist value, see Alan R. Cole, *Mothers and Sons in Chinese Buddhism* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998). Mulian also appears in the lists of filial sons in several texts from Dunhuang. See, for instance, Huang Zheng 黃征 and Zhang Yongquan 張涌泉, eds., *Dunhuang bianwen jiaozhu* 敦煌變文校注 (Dunhuang transformation texts collated and annotated; Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1997), pp. 1016 and 1154.

<sup>72</sup> See, for example, Rostislav Berezkin, "An Analysis of 'Telling Scriptures' During Temple Festivals in Gangkou (Zhangjiagang), With Special Attention to the Status of the Performers," *CHINOPERL Papers* 30 (2011): 44.

<sup>73</sup> Berezkin, "An Analysis of 'Telling Scriptures,'" pp. 38–39.

<sup>74</sup> For a survey of these, see Victor H. Mair, *Painting and Performance: Chinese Picture Recitation and Its Indian Genesis* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1988).



on paper either on the verso side of scrolls or on supplementary scrolls) to Tang dynasty *bianwen* on a variety of subjects and on Mulian in particular.<sup>75</sup>

It is pretty clear that the *Baojuan of Maudgalyāyana* as it presently exists does not show signs of having been designed so that the illustrations could be made use of in the most optimum fashion during a recitation of the text. While it is true that the accordion-fold format of the manuscript would allow both the illustrations and the accompanying text to be shown together in a way that would not be possible with a string-bound volume (which would typically allow you to look at either illustrations or text but rarely both at once), this would still not work as well as putting the text on one side (for the performer to consult) and the illustrations on the other (for the audience to see), as was done on one scroll found at Dunhuang.<sup>76</sup> Given the present setup of the manuscript, we can presume that audience and performer would be close together rather than on different sides of the text. Opening two pages at a time would tend to present both audience and performer with either illustrations or text but not both. Opening more than two pages at a time would make it easier for the performer to read text while the audience looked at pictures.

It is also possible, of course, that the manuscript was designed primarily for individual reading.<sup>77</sup> Texts were illustrated for different readers for different purposes. The wealthy, then as now, were drawn to finely illustrated texts as evidence of their status. Certain kinds of readers, such as less educated and semi-literate women, children, and men, were presumed to need pictures to help them understand texts. Significantly, the illustrations in this manuscript usually precede the written passages that treat the contents of the illustrations, that is to say, the illustrations depict events and people discussed slightly later in the written portion of the text.

The one person that we know was involved in the production of the manuscript was a woman, Imperial Consort Jiang. One can suppose that the women of the court constituted the target audience of this text. It is well-known that in the later periods *baojuan* texts were closely associated with female audiences.<sup>78</sup>

<sup>75</sup> See Mair, *T'ang Transformation Texts*, pp. 73, 99, 100–103. Since the publication of this text more work has been done on mural paintings at Dunhuang that depict the Mulian story. These include Fan Jinshi and Mei Lin, “An Interpretation of the Maudgalyāyana Murals in Cave 19 at Yulin,” *Orientalism* 27 (November 1996): 70–75, and Yu Xiangdong 于向东, “Yulin ku di 19 ku Mulian bianxiang yu Mulian bianwen” 榆林窟的19窟目連變相與目連變文 (Transformation tableau of Mulian in Yulin caves [Cave no. 19] and the *Mulian bianwen*), *Dunhuang xue jikan* 敦煌學輯刊 (Bulletin of Dunhuang studies) 1 (2005): 90–96. On the wall paintings at Dunhuang and storytelling in general, see Sarah E. Fraser, *Performing the Visual: The Practice of Wall Painting in China and Central Asia, 618–960* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2004).

<sup>76</sup> P4524.

<sup>77</sup> On visual aids and reading practices in China see Robert E. Hegel, *Reading Illustrated Fiction in Late Imperial China* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998).

<sup>78</sup> This is attested, for instance, in the novel *Plum in the Golden Vase*. On this question, see also Johnson, “Mu-lien in *Pao-chüan*,” pp. 59–60 and 64–69, and Tsuji Rin 辻リッ, “Hōkan no rufu to Min-Sei josei bunka” 宝卷の流布と明清女性文化 (The circulation of precious scrolls and female culture in the Ming and Qing), in Chūgoku Koseki Bunka Kenkyūjo 中国古籍文化研究所 (Institute for the study of the culture of classical Chinese texts), ed., *Chugoku koseki ryūtsūgaku no kakuritsu: Ryūtsūsū koseki, ryūtsūsū bunka* 中国古籍流通学の確立: 流通する古籍, 流通する文化 (The establishment of the study of the circulation of classical Chinese texts: Circulating classical texts and circulating culture; Tokyo: Yūzankaku, 2007), pp. 258–82.

It appears that along with quite simple manuscripts and cheap editions of popular works dealing with Mulian, such as *bianwen* and apocryphal sutras preserved by chance or extraordinary circumstances, there also survived early popular versions of the Mulian story that were luxury products of large format and with copious and finely done colored illustrations. As *baojuan* were produced more cheaply and for a much wider audience, the proportion and quality of illustrations declined precipitously.

## CONCLUSION

The newly available manuscript of *Baojuan of Maudgalyāyana* gives solid evidence that at least this *baojuan* text was considered important by a female member of an imperial court. It appears to have been very similar to *Baojuan of Mulian*, which probably dates to 1372 and is considered to be the earliest surviving example of a *baojuan* text. Used judiciously, *Baojuan of Maudgalyāyana* can show us what at least some of the missing portions of *Baojuan of Mulian* were like. I have shown that the most likely source for the basic prose narrative of both was an apocryphal sūtra, *Sūtra of Mulian*, probably dating to the thirteenth century. *Baojuan of Maudgalyāyana* preserves elements of Buddhist religion and literary format but shows both the influence of syncretic religion and popular forms of prosimetric storytelling. It provides information on the evolution of Buddhist subjects in Chinese popular storytelling, the history of storytelling accompanied by visual aids in China, and the audience for the earliest examples of *baojuan* texts. The next stage of my project is the publication of this manuscript in a scholarly edition, so that it will become widely available.

## APPENDIX 1: MAJOR VERSIONS OF THE MULIAN STORY (FOURTH TO SIXTEENTH CENTURIES) IN CHRONOLOGICAL ORDER

*Sūtra of Ullambana*: *Sūtra of Ullambana, Expounded by the Buddha* (*Fo shuo Yulanpen jing* 佛說盂蘭盆經), Chinese translation by Dharmaraksha (Chin. Zhu Fahu 竺法護), beginning of the 4th century.

*Bianwen of Mahāmaudgalyāyana*: *Bianwen of Mahāmaudgalyāyana Rescuing His Mother from the Underworld* (*Da Muqianlian minjian jiu mu bianwen* 大目乾連冥間救母變文), a manuscript from Dunhuang dated to 921 (S2614).

*Sūtra of Mulian*: *Sūtra of Mulian Rescuing His Mother Expounded by the Buddha* (*Fo shuo Mulian jiu mu jing* 佛說目連救母經), Japanese illustrated woodblock edition, reprinted in 1346 from the Chinese original of 1251 and held by the Kinkōji 金光寺 monastery in Kyoto. There is a related Korean illustrated woodblock edition dated to 1537 held by the monastery Yonngisa 煙起寺.

*Baojuan of Mulian*: *Baojuan of Mulian Rescuing His Mother [and Helping Her] to Escape from Hell and Be Born in Heaven* (*Mulian jiu mu chuli diyu sheng tian baojuan* 目連救母出離地獄生天寶卷), illustrated manuscript dated to 1372 and held in the National Library of China, Beijing.

*Baojuan of Maudgalyāyana*: *Baojuan of Reverend Maudgalyāyana Rescuing His Mother [and Helping Her] to Escape from Hell and Be Born in Heaven* (*Mujianlian zunzhe jiu mu chuli diyu sheng tian baojuan* 目健連尊者救母出離地獄生天寶卷), illustrated manuscript dated to 1440 and held in the State Hermitage Museum, Saint Petersburg.

*Baojuan of Maudgalyāyana no. 2: Baojuan of Reverend Maudgalyāyana Rescuing His Mother [and Helping Her] to Escape from Hell and Be Born in Heaven* (*Mujianlian zunzhe jiu mu chuli diyu sheng tian baojuan* 目犍連尊者救母出離地獄生天寶卷), manuscript from either the end of the sixteenth or beginning of the seventeenth century, held by the Library of the Research Institute of Drama in the Chinese Academy of Arts, Beijing.

*Drama Exhorting Goodness: Newly Compiled Drama Exhorting Goodness of Mulian Rescuing His Mother* (*Xinbian Mulian jiumu quanshan xiwen* 新編目連救母勸善戲文), compiled by Zheng Zhizhen 鄭之珍 (1518–1595), woodblock edition dated to 1582.

## APPENDIX 2: EXAMPLE OF A POETIC HALF OF A SECTION IN *BAOJUAN OF MAUDGALYĀYANA*

[Appears between the two translated prose half-sections]

When his mourning for his father ended,  
 All the family storehouses and treasuries were completely empty.  
 People busy themselves wasting their thoughts on account of profit,  
 In vain they establish families, storehouses, treasuries, and granaries.  
 They pile up rare treasures as high as mountains,  
 But no matter how much money you have you can't buy off death.  
 Luobu remained in mourning for three whole years,  
 Then he addressed his mother, saying "Listen to your son's words:  
 When father was alive the family wealth flourished,  
 Now the treasuries are empty and we lack money."  
 All sentient beings crave profit, in vain they waste their minds, all their scheming  
 is for nothing;  
 Striving only for wealth and rank, they are not willing to cultivate themselves,  
 and only focus on building their enterprise.  
 Your children and beloved wife, when death comes knocking, which of them  
 will be willing to die for you?  
 The lifespan of a person does not reach hundred years,  
 In vain you will store up myriads of coins.  
 You may pile up treasures as prominent as mountains,  
 But when death arrives it is all for nothing.  
 守制父親靈孝滿,  
 家私庫藏盡皆空。  
 人為財利費心忙, 枉置家緣庫藏倉。  
 積聚珍寶如山厚, 有錢難買不無常。  
 羅卜守服孝三年, 啟告親娘聽子言。  
 有父在日家財盛, 今庫空虛缺少錢。  
 眾生貪利, 枉費心機, 思惟總是虛。  
 只圖富貴, 不肯修持, 制造產業。  
 兒女嬌妻, 無常到來, 誰人替的你?  
 人生無百載, 枉置萬千金。  
 積寶如山盛, 無常也是空。